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Some
Hampstead
Memories

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Mrs. SIDDONS.

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Some Hampstead Memories

By Mary Adams

With Illustrations by Frederick Adcock

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SOME HAMPSTEAD MEMORIES

CHAPTER I.

Hampstead—The Wells—Belsize House—John Gay—Dr. Johnson—Colley Cibber—Leigh Hunt—The "Cockney School"—Keats—Wentworth Place—Fanny Brawne.

TIME was when Hampstead was a happy hunting-ground for lurking footpads and half-masked highwaymen. Coaches were stopped and rifled on the roads that crossed or skirted the famous Heath, while hapless pedestrians were not infrequently stripped of money and jewels and left dead or well nigh strangled under the bushes. The daring outlaws guilty of such crimes were, after capture and trial at the Old Bailey, strung up to prominent trees on the Heath and kept dangling there till their skins were "crackling in the sun."

There was an earlier time, fully seven centuries ago, when all Hampstead was so infested with wolves that the pioneer settlers on its wild heights dare not venture out across the Heath after dark; and geologists tell us that farther back still—far back in prehistoric ages—the whole Thames valley was a vast arm of the sea, and the higher ridges of Hampstead, that are to this day thickly coated with a soft,

silvery sea-sand, may have formed part of an ancient beach that was foam-whitened and deserted daily by the incoming and the outgoing tides.

James Thomson, the author of "The City of Dreadful Night," had this thought in mind when he wrote his "Sunday at Hampstead" and dreamed of the Heath as it may have been forty thousand years ago when the spot where he and his little holiday party of friends were sitting lay a hundred fathoms deep in the ocean—

> "A floor of silver sand so fine and soft,
> A coral forest branching far aloft;
> Above, the green dusk emerald golden-green;
> Silence profound and solitude serene."

Out of these mists of conjecture and tradition Hampstead materialises, clothes itself with history, and grows in size and definite importance as a very popular and fashionable health and pleasurs resort; an importance that, with certain modifications, it retains to this day. By the year 1698 its chalybeate springs had become so famoue for their medicinal qualities that the waters were sold by the flask at apothecaries' shops and at Coffee Houses in Fleet Street and Charing Cross, while physicians sent their patients out to lodgings in the village of Hampstead that they might drink at the Wells daily and enjoy the benefit of the purer air of the locality. It presently came to pass, therefore, that a Pump Room and Assembly Rooms were established in Well Walk, and Hampstead competed successfully with Bath and Tunbridge as a health resort for wealthy and fashionable invalids and idlers.

FLASK WALK · HAMPSTEAD
Fred.k Adcock

During the reigns of George I and George II, Belsize House, which stood in Belsize Park and was approached by the rows of great trees that still line Belsize Avenue, fell upon evil days and was transformed into an evil forerunner of Vauxhall Gardens. Formerly the residence of Sir William Waad, then, in succession, of Lord Wotton and of Lord Chesterfield, Belsize House was leased about 1720 to a Welshman named Howell who opened it as "a place of fashionable amusement." The nobility and gentry patronised it enthusiastically. But in the course of forty years the wilder and more vicious patrons of the establishment had gained so complete an ascendancy that it became a scandal and a byword to the neighbourhood, moneyed rakes of any social standing began to fight shy of it, and it was closed; to be reopened after an interval as a private residence, and to number among its later tenants the Right Honourable Spencer Perceval, M.P., who in 1812 was assassinated by Bellingham in the lobby of the House of Commons.

The noisier multitudes that still hold their saturnalia on the Heath on the Bank holidays of the year, bring no such ill odour and discredit upon the place by their rowdiest merriment as was brought upon it by the more aristocratic mobs who thronged to Belsize House and the Well Walk Assembly Rooms in the days of the Georges.

John Gay, the poet, temporarily broken in health, put up at a cottage in Hampstead, and drank the waters and sunned himself on the Heath in 1722. A little later, Dr. Arbuthnot sojourned there for the same purpose, and Pope came out now and then to share his walks with him. Another of the faculty, Dr. John Armstrong, endorsed Arbuthnot's approval of the healthful air of Hampstead in a stodgy

didactic poem called "The Art of Preserving Health," which he published in 1744:—

> "But if the busy town
> Attract thee still to toil for power or gold,
> Sweetly thou mayst thy vacant hours possess
> In Hampstead, courted by the western wind."

But its healthfulness and gaiety had been already more frivolously and more realistically celebrated in the successful comedy of "Hampstead Heath," produced at Drury Lane Theatre in 1707; and were celebrated again more than a century and a half later in the broad farce of "Happy Hampstead," which scored a roaring success at the Royalty in 1877.

Dr. Johnson, self-exiled from his best-loved Fleet Street, ruralised for a summer holiday in a cottage near the gates of Frognal Priory, and wrote there his two immortal satires: "London" and "The Vanity of Human Wishes," taking his daily constitutional across the wide stretch of the Heath, whither Goldsmith also liked to make his way when he felt disposed to wander afoot so far out of the town. Mr. Dyson, the friend and patron of Mark Akenside, the poet-physician, who earned an immense fame in his own generation by his polished but cold and not very imaginative "Pleasures of Imagination," was one of Sir Spenser Wells's predecessors at Golder's Hill. He gave Akenside a home there, introduced him to the Long Room, and "all the clubs and assemblies of the inhabitants," in the hope of setting him up in practice, but Akenside's unfortunate arrogance and superior airs gave such offence and made him so generally disliked that

HEATH STREET
Fred^k Adcock

Dyson settled him in Bloomsbury Square, and thenceforth he was only an occasional guest at the house on Golder's Hill. It was there, in 1758, that he wrote his Ode "On Recovering from a fit of Sickness, in the Country."

Colley Cibber, the hero of Pope's "Dunciad," resided for a season on Mount Vernon. Nearer Golder's Hill in Wildwood House, at North End, Lord Chatham lived in retirement during a period of mental affliction, shutting himself into a darkened room, holding converse with no one, and having his meals passed to him through an opening in the wall. At North End, Coventry Patmore resided, and a little later still Mrs. Craik, the author of "John Halifax, Gentleman." Not far removed, was the farmhouse where William Blake made his home for a while, and where Linnel the painter lived.

But Hampstead's chief and proudest literary associations are with that "Cockney School" of poetry of which Leigh Hunt was commonly regarded as the founder.

Leigh Hunt was born on the 19th of October, 1784, at a house called Eagle Hall, Southgate. He married and lived for some time at Beckenham, but in 1811, the cottage there proving too damp, he came to live at Hampstead. It was shortly after his arrival that he received his first letter from Shelley, which commenced the intercourse that developed into a firm and deep friendship affecting deeply the life and character of Hunt. It is well known how he became editor of the *Examiner*, and how he and his brother were fined £500 each and suffered imprisonment in separate gaols for two years for their famous attack on the Prince Regent. In 1817 he left the Vale of Health, and went to live at 13, Lisson Grove, N., in 1818 at 8, York Buildings,

New Road, and in 1820 at 13, Mortimer Terrace, Kentish Town. But he ever loved Hampstead and longed for his walks over the heath, and in 1821 we again find him living in the Vale of Health. Byron's acquaintance with Hunt began when the latter was in prison, and after he regained his freedom Byron was an occasional visitor at the lodgings of Hunt in Edgware Road and at his cottage at Hampstead. Of these visits of Byron, Hunt, in his autobiography, has left some amusing references. Byron, who looked very "fine" and "noble," used to drive up with the recently acquired Lady Byron. Her Ladyship would drive on and call for her husband on her way back. Byron would seat himself on a large rocking-horse which had been given to Hunt's children, and talk to Leigh Hunt of poetry, the *Examiner*, and other topics of interest. This was at Hunt's lodgings in Edgware Road; but in 1816, when he again took up his abode in Hampstead, in the Vale of Health, he was visited by Byron and returned the visit. He found him separated from his wife and Byron was particular to point out that the blame was his. He told Hunt that Lady Byron liked "Rimini," Hunt's poem, regarding which *Blackwood*, in a virulent and altogether unjust review, says: "No woman who has not either lost her chastity or is desirous of losing it, ever read 'The Story of Rimini' without the flushings of shame and self-reproach." The poem itself cannot possibly be called an immoral one, and its object was and is to prove the terrible effects of deceit. This poem, which is one of Hunt's best works, is interesting to us as the greater part of it was written in the cottage in the Vale of Health.

It was also at the cottage at Hampstead that Leigh Hunt was introduced to Keats by Charles Cowden Clarke. Keats' admiration

for Hunt was unbounded and the attitude of Hunt towards Keats was similar to that of Byron towards Hunt. Whilst Byron was pleased and doubtless gratified to include Leigh Hunt among his acquaintances, he could never reciprocate to the full the deeper feeling that Hunt felt towards him. So it was with Keats and Hunt. "I could not love him (Keats) as deeply as I did Shelley," says Hunt, "that was impossible. But my affection was only second to the one which I entertained for that heart of hearts."

Keats spent much time at Hunt's cottage in the Vale of Health, where a bed was often made up for him in the library, and Hunt certainly appreciated his literary genius for he published many of his poems in the "Examiner." At the cottage Keats met Shelley and John Hamilton Reynolds, and the literary coterie often included, besides Shelley and Keats, Charles Lamb, Hazlitt and Coleridge. It was also at Hunt's Hampstead cottage that Keats and Hunt wrote in competition their sonnets on "The Grasshopper and the Cricket,' each maintaining that the other's contained the greater merit.

Keats' sonnet was :—

"The poetry of earth is never dead :
When all the birds are faint with the hot sun
And hide in cooling trees, a voice will run
From hedge to hedge about the new-mown mead.
That is the grasshopper's—he takes the lead
In summer luxury—he has never done
With his delights, for, when tired out with fun,
He rests at ease beneath some pleasant weed.

The poetry of earth is ceasing never:
On a lone winter evening, when the frost
Has wrought a silence, from the stove there shrills
The cricket's song, in warmth increasing ever,
And seems, to one in drowsiness half lost,
The grasshopper's among some grassy hills."

Leigh Hunt's sonnet was :—

"Green little vaulter in the sunny grass,
Catching your heart up at the feel of June,
Sole voice that's heard amidst the lazy noon,
When even the bees lag at the summoning brass;
And you, warm little housekeeper, who class
With those who think the candles come too soon,
Loving the fire, and with your tricksome tune
Nick the glad silent moments as they pass;
Oh sweet and tiny cousins, that belong,
One to the fields, the other to the hearth,
Both have your sunshine; both, though small, are strong
At your clear hearts; and both seem given to earth
To sing in thoughtful ears this natural song—
Indoors and out, summer and winter, Mirth."

On the whole, perhaps Hunt's is the better sonnet, but the delicious first line of Keats' verse bears a stamp of genius which was almost, if not quite impossible with Hunt.

Certainly the happiest days of Hunt's life were spent at Hampstead; in after years, especially when in Italy, he indulged in tender retrospect over the happy meetings of the "Cockney School" in the

Yours to. Leigh Hunt.

Vale of Health cottage. Keats was seldom well and on one occasion, in May 1820, while suffering from a serious attack of hemorrhage of the lungs the Hunts brought him to their house and tenderly nursed him, but just at this time when the friendship was closest, an incident occurred which caused a rupture that was never healed. A letter came to Keats from his much loved Fanny Brawne, and was presented to him two days after its arrival, with the seal broken. The broken seal was typical of the shattered friendship and Keats immediately left the house.

Hunt continued to think tenderly of the ever-ailing Keats, who on account of his health had gone to Rome, and a letter written from Hampstead to Severn, the friend who had accompanied Keats to Italy, shows much tender affection.

VALE OF HEALTH,
HAMPSTEAD,

March 8, 1821.

DEAR SEVERN,

You have concluded, of course, that I have sent no letters to Rome, because I was aware of the effect they would have on Keats' mind; and this is the principal cause; for, besides what I have been told about letters in Italy, I remember his telling me upon one occasion that, in his sick moments, he never wished to receive another letter, or ever to see another face, however friendly. But still I should have written to you, had I not been almost at death's door myself. . . . . tell that great poet and noble-hearted man that we shall all bear his memory in the most precious part of our hearts, and that the world

shall bow their heads to it, as our loves do. Or if this again will trouble his spirit, tell him that we shall never cease to remember and love him ; and that, christian or infidel, the most sceptical of us has faith enough in the high things that nature puts into our heads, to think all who are of one accord in mind and heart are journeying to one and the same place, and shall unite somewhere or other, face to face, mutually conscious, mutually delighted. Tell him he is only before us on the road, as he is in everything else ; or, whether you tell him the latter or no, tell him the former, and add that we are coming after him. The tears are again in my eyes, and I must not afford to shed them. The next letter I write shall be more to yourself, and more refreshing to your spirits, which we are very sensible must have been greatly taxed. But whether your friend dies or not, it will not be among the least lofty of your recollections by-and-by that you helped to smooth the sick bed of so fine a being. God bless you, dear Severn.

Your sincere friend,

" Leigh Hunt."

Keats' associations with Hampstead were even more intimate than those of Hunt. He loved Hampstead not alone for its beauties or its literary associations but it was endeared to his heart by the closest of all human ties—it was the home of the girl he so passionately loved. John Keats was born at Moorfields on the 31st of October, 1795, of undistinguished parents, and does not appear to have inherited his genius. His father, Thomas Keats, was a Cornishman, and assistant to a Mr. Jennings who kept a large livery stable in

Moorfields close to Finsbury Circus. He won the affection of his master's daughter Francis and they were married. Mrs. Keats was passionately fond of amusement, especially dancing, and, as W. M. Rossetti says in his "Life of Keats," "Her pleasure-seeking tendency probably led her into some imprudences, for her first baby, John, was a seven months' child."

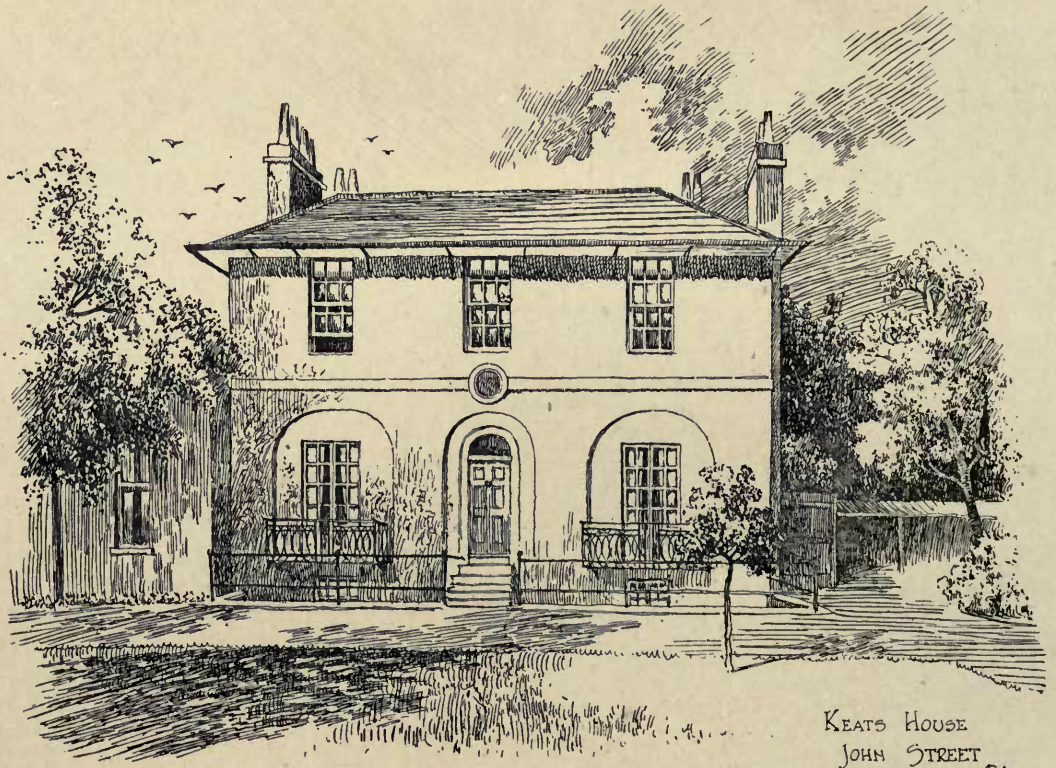
Keats went to school at Enfield and did not show any extraordinary talent. While still a schoolboy, Keats lost both father and mother, and after his school days he was apprenticed to an Edmonton surgeon. His first associations with Hampstead began with his acquaintance with Leigh Hunt and his brother, who, as we have seen, were living at Hampstead, though he had probably met them earlier at 8, York Buildings, New Road.* He at once became a devoted admirer of Hunt and an enthusiastic member of the "Cockney School." After some wanderings in the Isle of Wight, Margate, Stratford-on-Avon, and elsewhere, we find him back at Hampstead in 1817.

Keats took up his residence, with his brother Tom, in a first-floor lodging at No. 1, Well Walk, next door to the "Wells Tavern" then called the "Green Man." This lodging must not be confused with another house frequented by Keats and other *literati*, Wentworth Place. He had commenced his well-known "Endymion" at Margate, he continued it at Hampstead, and finished the first draft at Burford Bridge, Dorking, and returned to Hampstead on the 28th November, 1817. It was about this time that, in "a blind alley at Hampstead," Keats administered a thrashing to either a butcher's boy or "a

* It is not certain whether it was at Hampstead or at York Buildings that Keats first met Hunt, but the weight of evidence points to York Buildings.

scoundrel in livery," for ill-treating a cat or a small boy, the stand-up fight lasting for nearly an hour. This was also the time that Keats was introduced to Coleridge by Hunt, in a lane near Highgate. After shaking hands with Keats, "a loose, slack, not well-dressed youth," Coleridge whispered to Hunt: "there is death in that hand," a prophecy soon to be fulfilled. Keats' brother, Tom, died at the Hampstead lodgings, at the age of twenty, and John Keats was left alone in the world. He soon gave up his lodgings in Well Walk, and went as a sort of paying guest to a Mr. Brown, who lived at Wentworth Place, now Lawn Bank. Wentworth Place consisted of two houses, and in the one not occupied by Keats and Brown was a family of the name of Dilke. When the Dilkes were away, this house was occupied by a family of the name of Brawne, consisting of the mother, a son and two daughters. It was the elder daughter of Mrs. Brawne, Fanny, that Keats came to love with an all-devouring passion. After he had known her a couple of months Keats wrote, in a letter to some relatives, a description of his lady-love. "She is about my height, with a fine style of countenance of the lengthened sort. She wants sentiment in every feature. She manages to make her hair look well; her nostrils are very fine, though a little painful; her mouth is bad and good, her profile is better than her full face, which indeed is not 'full,' but pale and thin, without showing any bone; her shape is very graceful, and so are her movements; her arms are good, her hands badish, her feet tolerable. She is not seventeen.* But she is ignorant; monstrous in her behaviour, flying out in all directions; calling people such names that I was forced lately to make use of the

* Keats should, and possibly did write "nineteen." She was born in 1800.



KEATS HOUSE
JOHN STREET
HAMPSTEAD F.A.

term 'minx.' This is, I think, from no innate vice, but from a *penchant* she has for acting stylishly. I am, however, tired of such style, and shall decline any more of it. She had a friend to visit her lately. You have known plenty such. She plays the music, but without one sensation but the feel of the ivory at her fingers. She is a downright Miss, without one set-off. We hated her, and smoked her, and baited her, and, I think, drove her away. Miss Brawne thinks her a paragon of fashion, and says she is the only woman in the world she would change persons with. What a stupid! She is as superior as a rose to a dandelion."

Soon Keats loved her to distraction. "All I can bring you is a swooning admiration of your beauty," and other equally ardent passages occur in his letters to her. Keats became engaged to her somewhere about 1819. She became his one great passion. He loved her "almost with a fury," says Rossetti; but his love was never to be consummated by marriage; his want of means and any settled occupation, besides his ill-health, were bars to marriage that he was powerless to unlock. He never married the girl he loved so blindly, dying in far Italy, far from his beloved Hampstead and those that loved him, at the youthful age of twenty-six. His genius was recognised by a few during his lifetime, and since his death he has taken his place among the immortals.

His letters are beautiful specimens of a quiet literary style, and those to his beloved Fanny are full of tenderness.

Here is a passage from one, probably written at Hampstead in 1820:—

"My sweet love, I am happy whilst I believe your first letter,

Let me be but certain that you are mine heart and soul, and I could die more happily than I could otherwise live. If you think me cruel, if you think I have slighted you, do muse over it again, and see into my heart. My love for you is 'true as truth's simplicity, and simpler than the infancy of truth'—as I think I once said before. How could I slight you? how threaten to leave you? Not in the spirit of a threat to you—no, but in the spirit of wretchedness in myself. My fairest, my delicious, my angel Fanny, do not believe me such a vulgar fellow. I will be as patient in illness and as believing in love as I am able."

Another Hampstead letter written sometime in June or July, 1820, contains such passages as "I wish I could invent some means to make me at all happy without you. Every hour I am more and more concentrated in you; everything else tastes like chaff in my mouth. I feel it almost impossible to go to Italy. The fact is, I cannot leave you, and shall never taste one minute's content until it pleases chance to let me live with you for good," and the letter ends, "I wish I was either in your arms full of faith, or that a thunderbolt would strike me. God bless you."

"Lawn Bank" in John Street, is the house around which most memories of Keats cling, and will remain permanently linked with his memory.

Among other visitors to Hampstead, mostly in connection with Leigh Hunt's "Cockney School," was George Crabbe and Charles Lamb, already famous, convulsed the gatherings with his witticisms. Byron *patronised* it. Coleridge was a regular attendant, together with Hazlitt, Haydon, Talfourd, Cowden Clarke, and the brothers Horace and James Smith.

THE SPANIARDS
Fredk Adcock

CHAPTER II.

The Heath—Its natural beauties—Dick Turpin—The Spaniards Inn—"No Popery Riots"—George Frederick Cooke—Literary Associations of the Spaniards—Erskine House—The Firs—Caen Wood.

WHAT memories gather round Hampstead Heath! The word "Heath" is more or less a misnomer. One associates a heath with a certain amount of barrenness, with here and there a patch of gorse and heather. Hampstead Heath is an oasis, where nature displays a prodigal feast of her beauties. It is a magnificent expanse of undulating country "o'erhung with wild woods thickening green"; a country of glorious hills, meandering walks, and shady nooks. Here and there are little lakes which reflect the glorious sunshine that Dickens praised so much. There is the open part of the heath towards Parliament Hill, where one walks for miles over the greenest of green sward, and there is the wilderness part, starting at the famous flagstaff and stretching out to the Spaniards Inn on the one side and to Golder's Hill and the Garden City on the other.

The view from the flagstaff is certainly one of the most beautiful in the country. In the foreground is the heath with its medley of colours—an harmonious medley—then green meadows and trees, with the silvery waters of the old Welsh Harp just discernable through their thick foliage, and the warm red tiles of the Garden City in the distance looking like poppies in a cornfield; and, if the day be

clear, Harrow spire may be seen, and even the outlines of Windsor Castle.

The Heath has many associations. Keats and Leigh Hunt wandered across it, and wrote many sonnets whilst reposing under its trees. Byron sought and found inspiration in its dells. Dickens and Forster and Maclise loved it, perhaps, more than any other place. It was to Hampstead that Dickens, Thackeray, Tennyson and FitzGerald drove on the only occasion that they were ever all together. Edward FitzGerald had come to London with the manuscript of "Omar," and Tennyson introduced him to Dickens, who was with Thackeray, and they all drove out to Hampstead.

Hampstead Heath will always be associated in legend with a celebrity of a different character, but certainly not less popular than its *literati*—the redoubtable Dick Turpin. According to the legend, the Spaniards Inn was his chief rendezvous. There are many stories about Turpin, doubtless largely imaginative. What are called Dick Turpin relics are to be seen at the Spaniards Inn and likewise the famous stable in which the Highwayman stalled his beloved "Black Bess." You will be shown an old-fashioned key which locked the Toll Bar close by, and which, it is said, Turpin stole from the keeper, so that he might have free access at all times; also the ancient pistol and cutlass which Turpin carried, more as an earnest of things he might do than for actual use, for he seldom brought them into requisition.

But the Spaniards Inn has associations apart from this notorious Knight of the Road. The windows of the hotel have been covered by names of many men, some of whom have become famous. There are

JACK STRAW'S CASTLE.
Fred^k Adcock.

the autographs of Dick Turpin, Forster, Montague, Prince Napoleon (afterwards Napoleon III), and a suspicious one of Charles Dickens. It was at the Spaniards Inn that Oliver Goldsmith loved to sit and drink its nut-brown ale, and where he regaled his "Jolly Pigeon friends," as he called them, when they went for one of their "Shoemaker's holidays" on the heath. The "Spaniards" tea-garden was the spot that Dickens chose for Mrs. Bardell and her party to take tea in.

The Spaniards Inn has also associations with the "No Popery Riots" which started in London in June, 1780. It will be remembered how the rioters sacked Newgate and other prisons and property, especially the residences of His Majesty's Judges; how they entirely destroyed the residence of Earl Mansfield in Bloomsbury Square, and afterwards coming up through Camden Town reached Hampstead and proceeded to the heath, where they reorganised themselves and started for Earl Mansfield's country mansion at Caen Wood, with the intention of robbing its inhabitants and destroying the house.

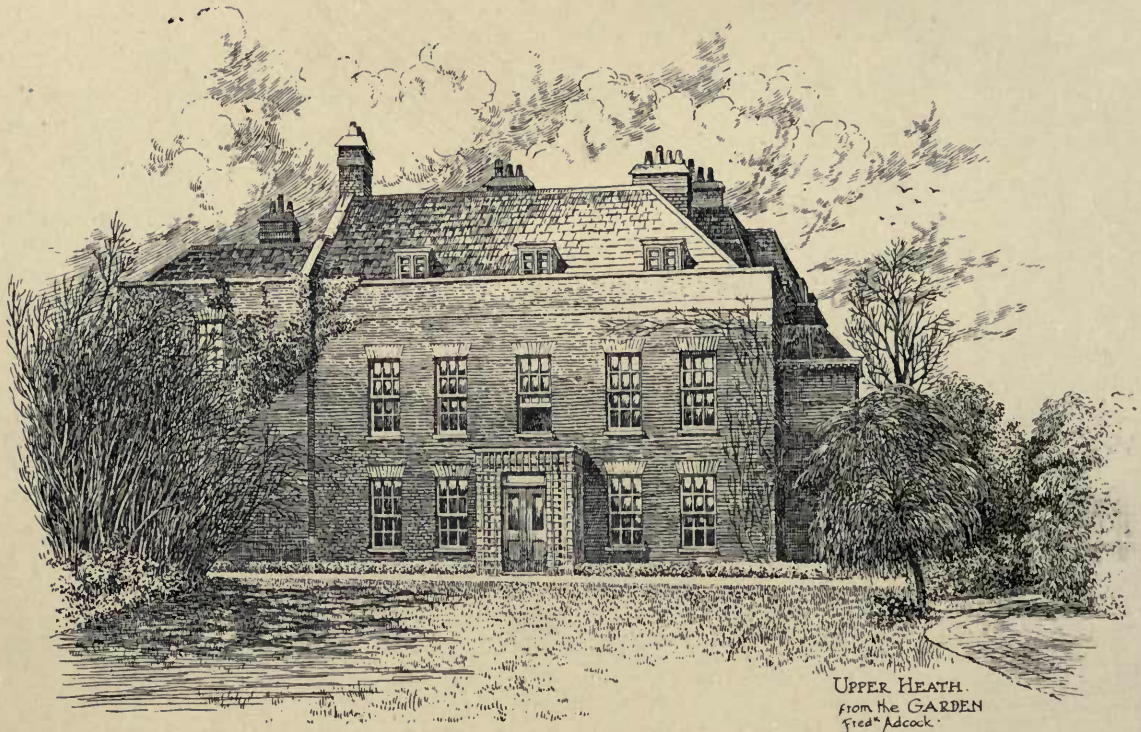
They arrived at the Spaniards inn armed with pitchforks, scythes, pokers and a few muskets. The landlord showed himself friendly and commended them upon their bravery. He reviled the judges and the Catholics and appeared to be in sympathy with the cause of the rioters and he asked them what their intentions for the immediate future were, and, upon learning that they were bent upon the sack of Mansfield's Mansion at Caen Wood, he expressed approbation and invited them into his grounds and brought forth barrels of beer which the mob soon emptied and asked for more, which was forthcoming. During the debauch the landlord despatched a man on horseback to the Horse

Guards and a troop of soldiers was at once sent, and upon its arrival at the "Spaniards" at once dispersed and entirely broke up the half-drunken mob.

Many notable men that I have not mentioned visited the "Spaniards," among them being the great tragedian, George Frederick Cooke. He retired there occasionally, it is stated, "to free himself from those degrading scenes of tavern dissipation in which he so frequently indulged after securing some of his most memorable histrionic triumphs on the boards of Covent Garden Theatre. His copy of the play of 'Richard the Third,' with the words of the title *rôle* scored to indicate special pauses and inflections in their delivery, and marginal notes giving directions for the stage business of the part, was entrusted to William Creswick, the veteran actor. On a fly-leaf of this beautifully preserved volume there is the autograph of Cooke, written under the word 'Hampstead.' It was during the period when Cooke lodged at Hampstead that he was on visiting terms with William Godwin, author of 'Political Justice,' and one of the most notorious of English Jacobites."

It is more than probable that the members of the "Cockney School" often visited the place. Even then it had many reminiscences to endear it to the hearts of literary men and it is scarcely likely that Leigh Hunt, Shelley, Keats, even Byron and Charles Lamb would so often meet at Hampstead and not visit a place at once so interesting and inviting as the Spaniards' Inn. Gainsborough often refreshed himself in its cool parlour, and Sir Joshua Reynolds, Garrick and Constable followed his example.

There is a charm about this Inn even to-day; its quaintness, its



UPPER HEATH.
from the GARDEN
Fred^k Adcock.

unique position—you do not notice it until it almost touches you—its old-world appearance, and, added to this, all its associations of the past.

Quite close to the Spaniards Inn is the historic mansion, Erskine House, the home of Lord Erskine the celebrated Lord Chancellor. During the time that he occupied it, the house was visited by many notable personages, including Edmund Burke who was a friend of Erskine's and often stayed at Erskine House with him. The house rang with the laughter of the wits who assembled at Erskine's gay parties, and who at other times listened in grave silence to the speeches and peans at the political dinners given by his Lordship. At one of these latter festivities, Sir Samuel Romilly mentions that "the party consisted of the Duke of Norfolk, Lord Grenville, Lord Grey, Lord Holland, Lord Ellenborough, Lord Lauderdale, Lord Henry Petty, Thos. Grenville, Pigot, Adam Edward Morris, Lord Erskine's son-in-law, and myself."

Near Erskine House is to be seen a clump of unpicturesque fir trees, which for some reason have quite a local reputation. It is certainly not on account of their beauty, and the only association connected with them is the fact that they were introduced into some of Constable's paintings.

Close by is Caen Wood belonging to the Earl of Mansfield, one of whose ancestors, Viscount Stormont, was instrumental in saving the life of James VI when he was attacked by Earl Gowrie in 1600. Literary gatherings took place here in the days of the "Cockney School" and at other times, and among those who attended were Keats, Southey, Coleridge and others.

It was near Caen Wood, in Millfield Lane, that Keats met Leigh Hunt taking a walk and presented him with a volume of his newly published poems. This lane appears to have been a favourite walk with many Hampstead celebrities. Leigh Hunt, Shelley, Keats, Byron, Lamb, Hazlitt and Coleridge being among the number. The district adjacent to the Spaniards Inn abounds in interesting reminiscences, but we must leave this ancient hostel and walk along the Spaniards Road towards the flagstaff to another place of great literary interest, Jack Straw's Castle, with its Dickens associations.

THE BULL & BUSH.
Fred^k Adcock

CHAPTER III.

Jack Straw's Castle—Its Associations with Dickens—The Kit-Kat Club—Its Famous Members—Coleridge at Hampstead—George Crabbe—The Hoare Family—Robert Louis Stevenson—George Romney—John Constable.

JACK STRAW was the notorious ringleader of the rioters of 1381, but there appears to be no evidence to connect him with the hostelry named after him at Hampstead. The name "Castle" comes from the fact that in early times an earthwork stood on the site of the present building. Jack Straw's Castle was originally a private house, behind which in the seventeenth century stood a gibbet on which a highway murderer of the name of Jackson was hanged in 1673. The wood of this gallows was afterwards used in the rebuilding of the house which later on became Jack Straw's Castle. The present inn was built quite early in the eighteenth century and has many literary and historic associations. The inn is mentioned by Washington Irving in "The Sketch Book." In "The Tales of a Traveller," Irving makes Dribble, the poor scribbler of Grub Street, say that during his rambles he visited Hampstead. "At such times I occasionally took my dinner at Jack Straw's Castle. It is a country Inn so named, the very spot where that notorious rebel and his followers held their council of war.*

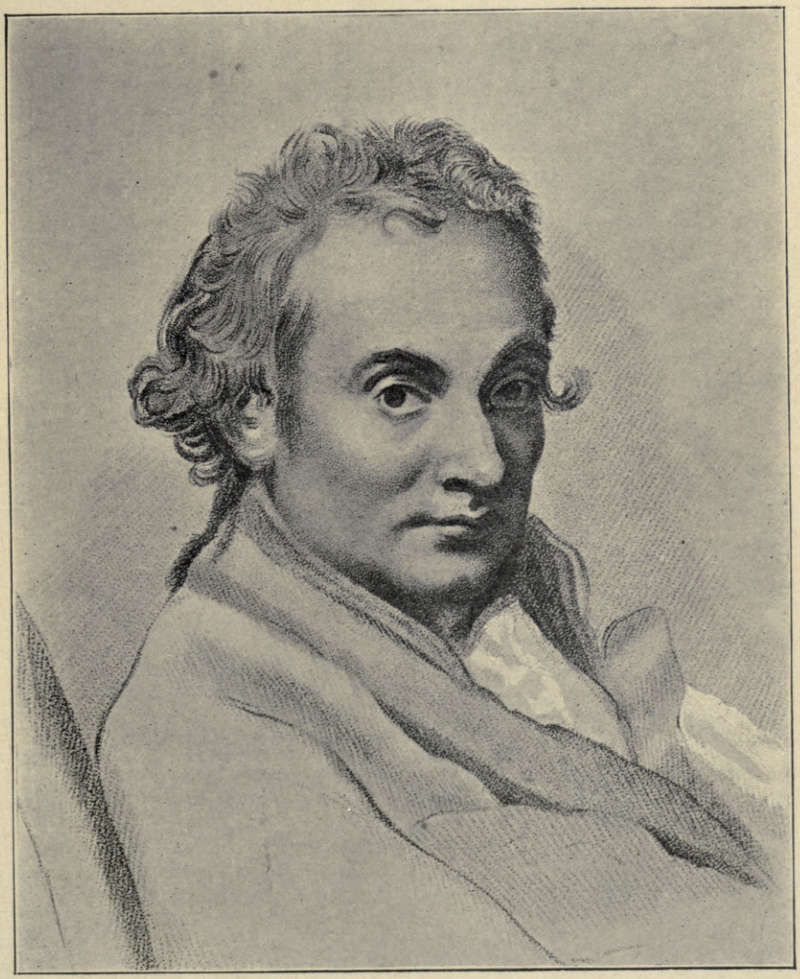
* Irving was drawing on his imagination or had been misinformed. Sir Walter Besant and others have pointed out that there is no evidence of the hostel's connection with Jack Straw.

It is a favourite resort of citizens when rurally inclined, as it commands fine, fresh air and a good view of the city. I sat one day in the public room of this Inn, ruminating over a beefsteak and a pint of port, when my imagination kindled up with ancient and heroic images. I had long wanted a theme and a hero; both suddenly broke upon my mind—I determined to write a poem on the history of Jack Straw. I was so full of my subject that I was fearful of being anticipated. I wondered that none of the poets of the day in their researches after ruffian heroes, had ever thought of Jack Straw. . . . . I sketched out the skeleton of my poem and nothing was wanting but to give it flesh and blood. I used to take my manuscript and stroll about Caen Wood and read aloud, and would commune with the personages that I had created and revelled in the scenes where I placed them."

It is with Dickens, John Forster, Maclise and their friends that Jack Straw's Castle is most intimately associated. In the letters of Dickens we find many references to Hampstead.

We read in a letter to Forster in 1837, "You don't feel disposed, do you, to muffle yourself up, and start off with me for a good brisk walk over Hampstead Heath? I knows a good 'ouse there where we can have a red-hot chop for dinner, and a glass of good wine." Forster adds, "This led to our first experience of Jack Straw's Castle, memorable for many happy meetings in coming years."

Three years later on, according to Forster, Daniel Maclise intimated that he should like to try his hand at an illustration for "The Old Curiosity Shop," which was then appearing in monthly parts. But Forster states, "I do not remember that it bore other fruit than a



GEORGE ROMNEY.

very pleasant day at Jack Straw's Castle, where Dickens read one of the later numbers to us." "Maclise," wrote Dickens," and myself, alone in the carriage, will be with you at two exactly. We propose driving out to Hampstead, and walking there, if it don't rain in buckets-full." Again in January, 1844, Dickens writes: "I had written you a line, pleading Jonas and Mrs. Gamp, but this frosty day tempts me sorely. I am distractingly late, but I look at the sky, think of Hampstead and feel hideously tempted. Don't come with Mac (Maclise) and fetch me; I could'nt resist if you did."

"Next month," observes Forster, "he is not the tempted, but the tempter." Dickens had written to him, saying, "Stanfield and Mac have come in, and we are going to Hampstead to dinner. I leave Betsy Prig as you know, so don't you make a scruple about leaving Mrs. Harris. We shall stroll leisurely up, to give you time to join us, and dinner will be on the table at 'Jack Straw's' at four."

Writing from Albaro during his Italian sojourn in 1844, Dickens remarked in a letter to Forster: "Lofty emotions rise within me when I see the sun set on the blue Mediterranean. *Apropos* of blue—in a certain picture called 'The Serenade,' for which Browning wrote that verse in Lincoln's Inn Fields, Mac painted a sky. If ever you paint the Mediterranean, let it be exactly of that colour. It lies before me now, as deeply and intensely blue. But no such colour is above me. Nothing like it. In the South of France, at Avignon, at Aix, at Marseilles, I saw deep blue skies; and also in America. But the sky above me is familiar to my sight. *Is it heresy to say that I have seen its twin brother shining through the window of 'Jack Straw's'?*"

The hostel has been much altered since the days of Dickens but

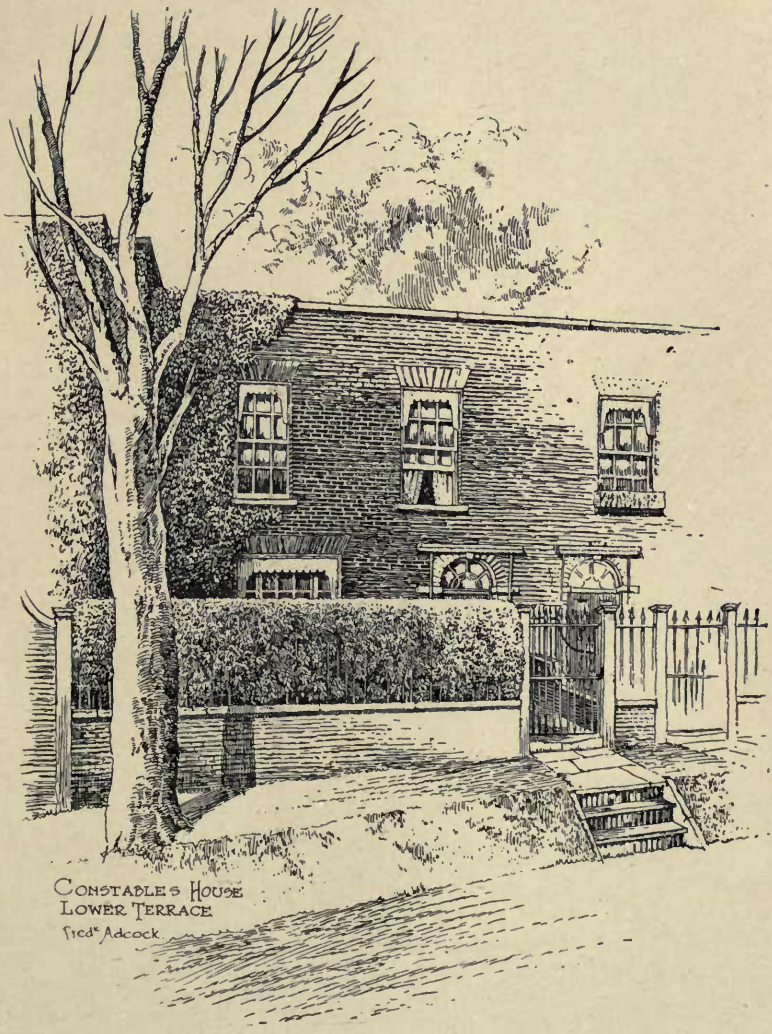
the renovation has been effected so as to retain as far as possible the ancient character of the place. In the bedroom which Dickens occupied during his many visits here, may be seen the chair in which the great novelist used to sit.

Close to Jack Straw's Castle, probably at the back of it, was formerly a race-course, the scene of many an amateur race and its attendant ruffianism, and here in 1739 and the following years the great George Whitfield was to be occasionally seen, preaching to "a congregation of the politer sort."

In the "Hampstead Annual" for 1904-5, we have a delightful little sketch of that celebrated literary institution or club, the "Kit-Kats," which from the beginning of the eighteenth century was the meeting-place of such *literati* as Addison, Pope, Walpole, Steele, Arbuthnot, Congreve, Hogarth, and a host of minor poets and wits. It will be remembered that the "Upper Flask," the club-house of the "Kit-Kats," was the refuge of *Clarissa Harlowe*, the heroine of Richardson's novel. In later years George Steevens lived at the "Upper Flask," where he was occasionally visited by Dr. Johnson.

This interesting house stands to-day much as it did in the palmy days of the "Kit-Kats," and is now known by the name of "Upper Heath." One could wish that it had retained its old name of "Upper Flask," but, like "Lawn Bank," the house of Keats, which in his time was Wentworth Place, the name has for some unaccountable reason been altered.

Both Coleridge and Crabbe loved Hampstead; the former was the more closely associated with the village. As a friend of Leigh Hunt, he was, naturally, one of the "Cockney School," and was



CONSTABLE'S HOUSE
LOWER TERRACE
Fred^k Adcock

often to be seen in the Vale of Health cottage. But his associations with Hampstead were not exclusively with the "Cockney School." In "Records of Hampstead," Sir T. H. Forres describes a visit of Coleridge to his father's cottage in the Vale of Health. "Very distinct in my mind," he says, "is the recollection of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, who came over from Highgate to dine with my father and mother. He came in his own irregular way, an hour before the proper time and before my father had returned from London. He walked up and down our pretty lawn with my mother, a handkerchief thrown over his white head, discoursing intently on all sorts of wonderful things, which were, no doubt, as unintelligible to her as they were to me."

Coleridge, too, was often to be seen in Millfield Lane, with Lamb and Hazlitt as his companions. The Bull and Bush Inn at North End was a place he strolled to; and many times did he walk over Parliament Hill from Highgate on his way to Hunt's cottage.

Wordsworth, in his poem: "Extempore Effusion upon the death of James Hogg," makes reference to the happy times spent at Hampstead with Coleridge and Lamb, and of the happy days when he and George Crabbe sauntered along the Spaniard's Road, pausing now and then to gaze upon smoky London and distinguish the shining dome of St. Paul's Cathedral.

"Our haughty life is crowned with darkness,
Like London with its own black wreath,
On which with thee, O Crabbe! forth looking,
I gazed from Hampstead's breezy heath."

Crabbe's associations with Hampstead gather around the Hoare

family. Mr. Samuel Hoare and his family occupied the fine old house on the Heath, opposite to Jack Straw's Castle, and at this house he was visited by many prominent people, including Byron, Scott, Wordsworth, Mrs. Siddons, Wilberforce, Buxton, Canning, Brougham, Campbell, Edward Irving, and Hannah More.

About a year after Crabbe had been Vicar of Trowbridge, Canon Ainger tells us, he was introduced to the Hoares. Crabbe did not favourably impress the family at once, but first impressions, happily, proved misleading and a deep friendship ensued which lasted for seventeen years, when Crabbe died. Crabbe writes regarding his visits: "I rhyme at Hampstead with a great deal of facility, for nothing interrupts me but kind calls to something pleasant." And in another letter: "Such is the state of the garden here (Hampstead) in which I walk and read, that in a morning like this, the smell of the flowers is fragrant beyond anything I ever perceived before. It is what I can suppose may be in Persia, or other Oriental countries—a Paradisical sweetness."

In the quaint little corner cottage of Capo di Monte, on the Upper Terrace, Mrs. Siddons lived for a few months in the year 1814. All we know for certain about her sojourn in Hampstead is that she shopped there and electrified the local draper by the dramatic fervour of her query, "Will it wash?" as she held up some material to the light and regarded it with tragic intensity. Probably, as she walked up and down in the shade of the elms in the fresh Hampstead air, looking towards the glowing west, she drained again the highly-flavoured cup of fame, heard once more the echoes of applause, and

ROMNEY'S HOUSE
HOLLY BUSH HILL
Fred^k Adcock

recalled the struggles, vexations, and marvellous triumphs of her chequered career.

At Abernethy House, Mount Vernon, lived for a short time Robert Louis Stevenson, who had lodgings there with Sidney Colvin. Stevenson was then twenty-four years of age, and had come hither from his Suffolk friends, who first recognised his genius. In the "Hampstead Annual," for 1902, Sidney Colvin writes :—"At Hampstead, his ways were regular and his apparel relatively neat and normal; he even had with him a frock-coat and tall hat, which he had once worn at a wedding. I can see him now, as he walked with me in that unaccustomed garb down the Quadrant and along Piccadilly to the Royal Academy." It was a particular incident in the Hampstead lodging that suggested to Stevenson a paper "On the Movement of Young Children," and it appeared in the *Portfolio*. The little paper is merely an exercise, like much of Stevenson's work at the time, in describing some of the pretty minor ripples of life's surface and analysing the causes of their charms.

George Romney had his original abode at the Holly Bush Inn. In 1796-8, Romney bought a plot of land at the back of the inn and built thereon a studio and some living rooms, and the large room now a part of the Constitutional Club was this self-same studio.

At No. 40, Well Walk, and also on the Lower Terrace, lived Constable, who did so much for freedom in English art and left a real and permanent impression upon French art. Constable was born at East Bergholt in Suffolk, but spent the latter years of his life at Hampstead and painted many of his pictures here.

Nor are Romney and Constable the only artists who have been associated with Hampstead. At different dates, Hogarth, Blake, Linnell, Collins, and George du Maurier lived there. Clarkson Stanfield lived in the High Street, in an old house close to that occupied by Longman the publisher, round whose hospitable board Byron, Moore, Scott and other leading contemporaries had foregathered. Close by, in Church Row, Mrs. Barbauld lived; and there Fuselli the artist had a lodging at three shillings a day.

J. Baillie

CHAPTER IV

Joanna Baillie; Birth; First Published Work; Residence at Bolton House; Friends; Quotations; Some Opinions concerning her—Percy Bysshe Shelley.

Bolton House is situated on Windmill Hill and almost opposite to the rambling old house that was once the studio of Romney. This is certainly one of the most interesting houses in Hampstead, for here lived for almost half-a-century the clever and gifted Scotch Playwright and Poetess, Joanna Baillie, and her sister Agnes.

Joanna Baillie was born on the 11th September, 1762, at Bothwell, Lanarkshire. She was prematurely born and during her childhood was very delicate. Her youth was spent at Bothwell and she came to live at Hampstead in 1802, and in 1806 moved to Bolton House upon the death of her mother. Previous to coming to Hampstead she had in 1790 published a volume of poems, under the title of "Fugitive Verses." They were published anonymously and did not attain to any marked success. In 1798 she discovered that her true *forte* was dramatic composition, and in that year her "Plays on the Passions" were published and caused something of a sensation in the literary world. Being published anonymously, Sir Walter Scott was suspected of being the author. This work brought her into touch with the great Scottish novelist, and during her long sojourn at Hampstead, Sir Walter Scott was her constant visitor, counsellor, and friend.

It was at Hampstead that some of her best work was done; and though her plays would not prove popular on the modern stage, they are characterised by her wonderful faculty of invention and a wealth of stately language. Her blank verse possesses a notable dignity and displays a true phonetic conception, which will be seen in the following quotations from works written mostly at Bolton House.

"Think'st thou there are no serpents in the world
But those who slide along the grassy sod
And sting the luckless foot that presses them?
There are who in the path of social life
Do bask their spotted skins in Fortune's sun
And sting the Soul."

(*De Montfort*, Act 1, Sc. 2).

The following from her song, "The Phantom," is very beautiful:

"Sweet sleep be with us one and all
And if upon its stillness fall
The visions of a busy brain,
We'll have our pleasure o'er again
To warm the heart, to charm the sight,
Gay dreams to all, good-night, good-night."

This also, from "Basil," is an apt definition of fear:

"The brave man is not he who feels no fear
For that were stupid and irrational;
But he, whose noble soul its fear subdues,
And bravely dares the danger nature shrinks from."

CHURCH ROW
Fred^k Adcock

Whilst living at Bolton House, Joanna Baillie made many eminent friends; indeed, there were few persons prominent in literature or art who did not desire to become acquainted with her. Under the date of April 28th, 1840, Lord Jeffrey writes: "I forgot to tell you that we have been twice out to Hampstead to hunt out Joanna Baillie, and found her the other day as fresh, natural and amiable as ever, and as little like a tragic muse." Rogers often visited her at her Hampstead home. Wordsworth sought her out and might have been seen in her company walking over Hampstead Heath.

Crabb Robinson—also a friend of hers—says of her, that she was "small in figure and her gait is mean and shuffling, but her manners are those of a well-bred lady." Wordsworth once said, when speaking of her, "If I had to present to a foreigner any one as a model of an English gentlewoman, it would be Joanna Baillie." In "Memories of Great Men," we read, "I remember her (Joanna Baillie) as singularly impressive in look and manner, with the 'Queenly air' we associate with ideas of high birth and lofty rank. Her face was long, narrow, dark and solemn, and her speech deliberate and considerate, the very antipodes of 'chatter.' Tall in person, and habited according to the 'mode' of an older time, her picture, as it is now present to me, is that of a very remarkable dame, dressed in coif and kirtle, stepping out, as it were, from a frame in which she had been placed by Vandyke."

In "Memorable London Houses" is a sketch of Bolton House and a short article on Joanna Baillie, which concludes: "Her character was marked by the strictest integrity, the purest morality, great moral courage, and a never failing charity." Scott thought so highly of her works, especially of the tragedy of "Fears," which in richness

and variety of fancy he placed on a level with Shakespeare, that he refers to her in his introduction to the third canto of "Marmion," as "the immortal Joanna." She died quite suddenly, at Hampstead, after but one day's illness, on the 23rd February 1851, at the advanced age of eighty-nine.

Hampstead is proud of its associations with Joanna Baillie; the town has associations with genius greater than hers, but not one lived so long and was away so seldom from the heath she loved so well and from the quaint and picturesque streets which were a feature of Old Hampstead. She sought her inspiration where Keats had found his, and where Shelley, Hunt, Coleridge and Byron had communed together but a little while before.

There are four names of men connected with Hampstead's "Cockney School," that are inseparable, whose lives were strangely interwoven, so much so that to mention one is instinctively to think of the others, they are John Keats, Leigh Hunt, Coleridge, and Percy Bysshe Shelley. Keats, Shelley and Coleridge possessed genius in a marked degree, while Hunt thought that he did, and undoubtedly did in a limited sense, but his works, with perhaps one exception, cannot be classed with those of Keats and Shelley. I have spoken in a previous chapter of Leigh Hunt and John Keats, but Shelley's name will always be associated with Hampstead on account of his friendship with Leigh Hunt and others of the "Cockney School."

We do not know a great deal about Shelley's association with Hampstead, but during the time that he was living at Marlow with his beloved Mary (whom he had now married) much of his time was spent with Leigh Hunt in the Vale of Health cottage, and here he

STANFIELD HOUSE: HAMPSTEAD
F. Adcock

made the acquaintance of many literary men, including the brothers Smith, authors of "Rejected Addresses." He took a childish delight in launching paper boats on the Vale of Health Pond, and on one occasion he generously gave Leigh Hunt £1,400, and it is probable from various references in Leigh Hunt's autobiography, and in other works, that Shelley was more often at Hampstead than the chronicling of actual visits would lead us to believe. Hampstead is haunted with Shelley memories, the gentle youth—he was scarcely more—with his beautiful eyes and wild ragged locks, his irresistible manners and his strange eccentricities, frequented our streets, our houses, our heath, and he cannot have failed to love them. It was during one of Shelley's visits to Leigh Hunt that he found a woman almost frozen to death on Hampstead Heath. He took her in his arms to the nearest house and, being refused admittance, went on with his burden to Hunt's cottage, where the woman was given shelter and medical attention.

Of the three poets who had such intimate associations with Hampstead—Keats, Byron and Shelley—John Addington Symonds says: "Byron died when he was thirty-six, Keats when he was twenty-five, and Shelley when he was on the point of completing his thirtieth year. Of the three, Keats enjoyed the briefest space for the development of his extraordinary powers; his achievement, perfect as it is in some poetic qualities, remains so immature and incomplete that no conjecture can be hazarded about his future. Byron lived longer and produced more than his brother poets; yet he was extinguished when his genius was still ascendant, when his "swift and fair creatures" were issuing like worlds from an archangel's hands. In his case we have perhaps only to deplore the loss of masterpieces that

might have equalled, but could scarcely have surpassed, what we possess. Shelley's early death is more to be regretted. Unlike Keats and Byron, he died by a mere accident. His faculties were far more complex and his aims were more ambitious than theirs. He therefore needed length of years for their co-ordination ; and if a fuller life had been alotted him, we have the certainty that from the discords of his youth he would have wrought a clear and lucid harmony."

After spending a year at Marlow, Shelley and his wife left for Italy on March 11th, 1818. They went to Milan, Venice, Rome, the Bagni di Lucca, and in December settled at Naples. They looked up Byron at Venice and he (Byron) lent the Shelleys his villa of the Cappuccini at Este, where Shelley commenced "Prometheus Unbound" and composed "Lines written among Euganean Hills."

I will not dwell upon the four years of Shelley's life in Italy—eventful and fruitful years—but close this chapter with a few words concerning Shelley's tragic end. Shelley's Hampstead friend, Leigh Hunt, with his wife and family had arrived at Genoa. With Hunt he spent a happy day, Shelley showing his friend the Campo Santo and other "lions" of Pisa. On the evening of the day following, Shelley left by chaise for Leghorn, and in the afternoon of the next day, together with Williams he set sail for Lerici, the only other occupant of the boat being the sailor lad Charles Vivian. The afternoon had been intensely hot, and the sailors in Leghorn harbour were making ready for a gale which the elements promised. It came, sharp, and lasting only twenty minutes, but it swamped Shelley's boat and her little crew had disappeared. Over a week went by before the bodies were discovered and then that of Shelley was washed up at Via

JOHN CONSTABLE
Aged 20.

Reggio. An accident had robbed the world of one of its brightest stars just when his marvellous genius was expanding to the full.

Something of the aspect and atmosphere of Old Hampstead still linger about Flask Walk and the High Street, with its quaint byways ; about Church Row and some of the old houses in the quieter thoroughfares. "Though much is taken, much abides," and Hampstead is still rich not only in memories but in visible memorials of a past peopled with men and women whom the future will not be willing to forget.

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